

## **Saudade by listlessness**

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**Characters:** Jonathan Byers, Steve Harrington

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**Summary:**

Steve looks back at once was and what should have been.

## Saudade

### Author's Note:

Written for [Stonathan Week 2018](#) day six - Stranger Rugrats. This is probably far more depressing than what was originally intended.

You were my first. I don't think you realised that at the time. You were so nervous, and I can still remember how your hand trembled in mine and I had to squeeze your shoulder to calm you down. I had the hiccups – do you remember that? I hiccuped right in your mouth and you were so mad, so mad, I thought you were going to hit me. But you didn't. You just looked offended and confused until I hiccuped again and you began to laugh. Whatever nerves I felt began to disappear when your face lit up like that, and you realised I had no idea what I was doing. You've always been so good at diffusing a situation and calming me down. I wish you'd come back and do that again.

It's funny, though, looking back. I was her first, and she was yours, and you were mine. The first boy, anyway. I think I was your first guy, too, even with all the rumours. I think that's how it was always meant to go. You and me and just *us* under the sky. We found each other for the first time under that clear, sunny day, and then we found each other again, five years later, surrounded by monsters in the black of night. I still can't say what brought me to your house that night. I think I was chasing that feeling of us before, when we'd just learned to swear and I had a lisp from all that metal in my mouth and you were a little more social than you are now. I know we weren't ever really friends. Like, we wouldn't have ever called each other friends. But you were my best friend back then.

We were so small. It wasn't that long ago, but I remember how small we both were. You hit your growth spurt early and I hit mine late, but because of the year between us, we managed to be the same height for a long time. Everything was so big to us then. I walked past that old abandoned house last week and found the tree we used to climb out the back. The lowest tree branch is now up to my eyes. Remember how we used to have to help each other up? Back then

you must have been eighty pounds soaking wet, and I was always so worried I'd kick you right in the face when you insisted on giving him a lift up. I still carried a lot of baby fat all over. Do you know I still have that awful sweet tooth? Ma hides the candy a lot better these days. But back then, my braces made it a bit difficult to fix my craving, but I'd still try my hardest. Every time I find one of her box of Samoas now, I'll sit in my room and let it melt a little in my hand and pretend we're back under that tree over that summer.

We held hands under that tree. Your hands were always cold. Was it you who stuck your hands up my shirt or am I thinking of someone else? Time still hasn't changed anything, though. Your hands were still cold, years later. I remember it catching me by surprise when you took my hand that awful night. It distracted me from the monster. For a moment, we were back in the summer of '78, sharing Popsicles and sipping Kool-Aid, and you were holding my hand because... I dunno. But I liked you holding my hand. I still do. That's one of the things I miss now, being able to reach over and take your hand whenever I want to. Some nights I still wake up in a cold sweat and I look for you.

A lot of the nights are like that. I'll wake up in one state or another, looking for you, your name on my lips. Sometimes there are nightmares. Quite often there are nightmares, really. Other nights are full of pleasant dreams, and I want to reach over and wrap myself around you. And then there are the nights where I need to change the sheets. During those nights, I remember the nights we spent together. The nights when we were children, and you'd slip under the gate and climb up to hide in my bedroom when your folks were fighting. And the nights when we were older, and had completely different needs. No matter what happened during the night, waking up next to you was always the best.

It will always be the best. I used to watch you while you slept. The dawn sun would always hit my window and cast you in a gorgeous golden light. Your hair was so much fairer then, a wheat blonde that looked almost white when the light hit it. I'd try to count your lashes, which were the same blonde. I'd count the pale freckles on your nose and press my finger to my lips and pretend I was still asleep when you inevitably woke up. I did that right up until our last night

together. I kissed you on the morning you left me and we had to be so quiet, so fucking quiet, because my parents were right downstairs.

We both knew you were leaving soon and that would be our last opportunity. Soon you would be gone. I should have asked you to stay. I should have begged you to stay. But I've never been too good with words. I can rant and gleefully talk about movies and music with the best of 'em, but I've never been good with expressing my emotions. I should have told you how much I need you and how much I miss you and how much... how much I wish you would have stayed. The words were right there on my tongue, so heavy and ready to come out. I couldn't bring myself to say them, though. If I did, it meant it was real. It meant you were about to go forever. All I could do was kiss you and hiccup in your mouth and apologise.

We'd spent so much of our life together. From small children, with our pinkies wrapped together and ice cream dripping down our wrists, to ten years later, wrapped around one another and huddled under the blankets as though it would prevent the future from catching up with us. It was right there and we could taste it and both of us wanted to pretend that it wasn't coming. I think both of us believed so relentlessly that it wasn't going to happen, that time wasn't going to tear us apart.

Whenever I get the hiccups, I still think of you. I think of the first time we kissed and how angry you looked. And I remember the last time, when I knew I'd broken your heart.

I think we can still live like that. I don't believe it's beyond us yet. I think if you come back to me, we can live in that world once more. We can escape Hawkins, just like we talked about. We can go somewhere else. I'll go with you this time, I won't back out like I did then. I promise. Give me one more chance.

I love you. Please come home.